HARAMBEE FLAME

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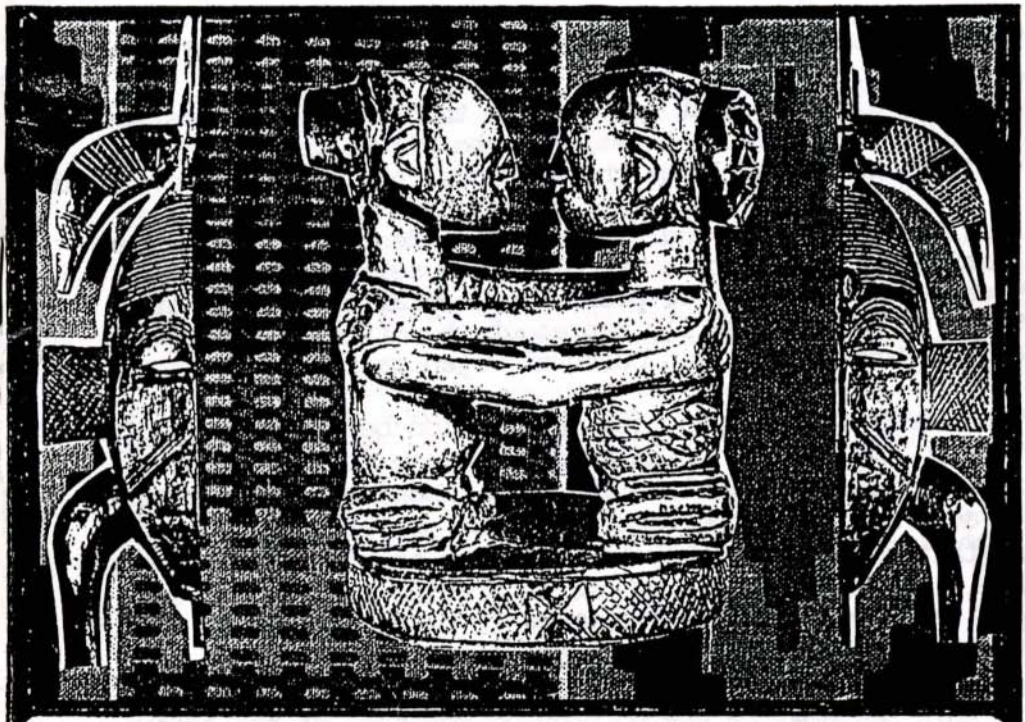

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publication, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we seek to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives, and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiritual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-determination. Toward this purpose, we present commentaries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possible. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., the nations of Africa, and elsewhere. In "Commentary," we offer analysis of and views about current events and developments.

We encourage you to send your comments, essays, poems, etc. to HARAMBEE FLAME; Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68542-2500.

GUEST COMMENTARY

ON THE MATTER OF THE ABSENCE OF ELDERS STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

By Ahati N. N. Toure

An address to the occasion of the 28 July 2001
Awards Ceremony of the Harambee Cultural Organization
at the Nebraska State Penitentiary, Lincoln, Nebraska

Respect for elders is part of our traditional culture

The importance of the respect for elders is something that we recognize from our own experience of Afrikan culture in the United States, a culture that has its origins in the Afrikan Continent. In the sacred Ifa scriptures, Chief S. Solagbade Popoola points out that one stanza in Ogbe-Alara urges that the person for whom the message comes up in divination must give respect to elders, his/her parents, and those in authority over him/her, and that he or she must seek the favor of his/her parents at all times. S/He must show kindness, care, understanding, and love to all elders and to his/her parents so that s/he can be blessed at all times; and s/he must avoid provoking them to the point that they would curse him/her. For whatever they wish for him/her from their hearts, either blessing or cursing, will come to pass. If it is cursing, no amount of sacrifice can overcome it.[1]

Chief Fasina Falade notes that Ifa teaches humility to and respect for elders is an obligation and will ensure success in life's endeavors. He cites the odu Okanran-Oo-Rote, which says in part: "If a child respects his father, if a child respects his mother, all what he plans to do will be fruitful. His destiny shall be achievable." On the other hand, Chief Falade cautions that the Ifa scriptures teach us that the reward of disrespect to elders is a shameful death and lack of success.

Interestingly, Ifa teaches that this respect should also be extended toward women. Chief Falade quotes a stanza in Ose-Ba-Lefon that states in part: "A person who does not appreciate the value of a fellow human being, who does not recognize the importance of a fellow human being, a person who is not well learned, is the person who will say a woman does not amount to anything in life. ... Let nobody underestimate her or be insolent to her. Those who show respect, they will be blessed with wealth. They will be blessed with spouse. They will be blessed with children. They will be blessed with longevity. Let no one use any negative language on women."[2]

There is also the recognized obligation of elders to provide guidance

The Ifa scriptures also teach that elders are obliged to provide guidance and protection to the youth. Chief Falade cites a verse in Otura-Alaraba, which says in part: "The errand that youths send elders, let them refuse not. There are obligations which parents ought to render to their children." Further, says Chief Falade, the Ifa scriptures teach that the elders must allow the youth to express their views. An elder is also obliged never to abuse his or her authority, never to use his/her power, privilege, or position to cheat or to harm others. To do so will lead to their disgrace. Thus, our culture emphasizes the importance of elders as repositories of wisdom and

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[1] See S. Solagbade Popoola, Practical Ifa Divination: Ifa Reference Manual, Vol. 3, For the Beginner and Professional (Brooklyn, NY: Athelia Henrietta Press, 1997).

[2] See Fasina Falade, Ifa: The Key to It's Understanding (Lynwood, CA: Ara Ifa Publishing, 1998) for this and subsequent references.

experience to serve as guides and leaders, to nurture the community, and to assist in its growth and strength and security.

The role of elders is also to serve as examples for emulation. They, by the example of their lives and the values by which they live, teach us what our larger purpose is and to whom is our primary obligation. The sense of peoplehood that glues each person to each other, to a sense of loyalty and love for the larger group, for the community and for the nation, is the work of the elders. Without elders, there is no capacity for the development of the consciousness of nation and of national obligation and patriotism. There is no possibility to inspire in the youth a commitment to nation-building.

Why are there so few elders serving as guides today?

The important role of elders has deteriorated in Afrikan society and culture in the United States, even markedly from the time of my experience growing up. I recall a time when an elder would never be addressed by his or her first name without a Mr. or Mrs. or Ms. attached to the name. I recall the first time I ever encountered the practice of calling elders by their first names was when I went to college and was exposed in an unprecedented way to Europeans and to their culture. I still found it extremely uncomfortable to call an elderly person by his/her first name, so I refused to use their name at all. Even now, so many years later, I still find it difficult to call an elder by his/her first name.

That feeling of tremendous respect was a result of an expectation, borne of experience, that elders cared about you and looked out for you, even if at times they were perceived to be annoyingly meddlesome in one's private affairs. There was no sense in my growing up of feeling abandoned or uncared for. Afrikan elders indulged us, listened to us, told stories (history) to us, taught us values, and showered us with love and affection. Thus, it was only natural that they were to be revered, that they commanded respect.

The reduction of the importance of the role of elders in our culture today is due to European influence, which exaggerates the value of youthfulness for capitalistic profit. It is also aided by conditions of oppression and economics that impinge upon our lives. Because we are not sovereign, both the nature of economics in European society and the nature of oppression tend to fracture the extended Afrikan family, separate family members in great geographical distances and in separate dwelling places, and pushes a cultural trend among us toward individualism. This is true among fairly well-to-do, middle class Afrikans.

On the other hand, the masses of Afrikan people have faced systematic impoverishment, assisted by deliberate government policies, that have had the effect of disuniting and weakening the Afrikan family structure so as to undermine the capacity of Afrikans to psychologically and culturally resist European domination. For example, there are many Afrikan men and women today who have grown up alienated from their fathers, thus lacking the love and guidance and protection that is essential to the family life and to the development of psychologically strong and healthy persons. As a consequence, many youth have suffered emotional scars and psychological traumas that have personally weakened them. With no experience of love from their elders, there is in their hearts resentment, cynicism, suspicion, alienation, and self-doubt.

In the collective sense, this absence of loving male elders has led to youthful misdirection upon which European oppressors have taken full advantage, not only to fill their jails and prisons, but also to incapacitate the youth through miseducation and undereducation. Miseducation and undereducation renders the youth unskilled both intellectually and materially, which prevents them from having the inner resources to effectively challenge and even to

threaten European domination. The absence of elders to guide and to protect youth, and to provide for their education and emotional nurture -- many of these elders scarred and debased themselves by the onslaught of psychological, cultural, and economic oppression -- has led to a condition in which Afrikans as a whole are vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation almost at will. It has created a situation that in Afrikan terms amounts to a state of social anarchy.

A great part of the consequence of the loss of elders is that youth are at war with elders. They are angry, sometimes bitter, sometimes contemptuous, and fundamentally deeply hurt because they feel rejected, abandoned, and unprotected. They feel a connection to themselves, but to little in the Afrikan community that extends beyond themselves. This is a defensive, reactive posture. This feeling has contributed profoundly to the internal weaknesses and disunity of family and community in Afrikan culture. The old connection between elders and youth that I knew has been broken. The severity of Afrikan oppression in this society, a severity that many of us, caught up in the dynamics of it often do not fully understand, has produced this emotional and psychological chasm between the generations.

We must save ourselves because our enemy will not and cannot

On the other hand, we must also look at Afrikan responsibility for the perpetuation of this condition. That is, the initiative for correcting any problem of oppression rests with the oppressed themselves because the oppressor is by definition inhuman and, therefore, unwilling and incapable of initiating any correctives. One can only look to the oppressor for oppression. That is the only realistic expectation one can have of the enemy. As a result, the ability of the oppressor to maintain the strength and viability of oppression rests with the collaboration of the oppressed in their own oppression. Without such active collaboration, the ability of the oppressor to maintain domination will collapse.

The beginning of effective liberation for Afrikans will proceed, therefore, from our inner resolve to defeat the oppressor and to achieve revolutionary victory, sovereignty, independence, and power. The beginning of liberation is in the consciousness. In truth, reality is the manifestation of consciousness. This latter point, in fact, is what our ancestral wisdom teaches us. If we would return to our ancestral traditions, we would know the secrets our ancestors used to transform consciousness so that they could transform their practical, everyday reality for the better.

Thus, one of the reasons that elders no longer play an important and pivotal role in Afrikan culture today is because we have accepted the culture and values of Europeans. We no longer practice Afrikan traditional culture, which if it were part of our nature, of the way we think and act, would compel us to organize ourselves and relate to each other in ways that would compel tighter organization, fierce loyalty, and effective unification.

We do not ritualize our ancestors in any way, so that we do not cultivate historical memory, a sense of cultural continuity, and a strong and ineradicable sense of personal accountability. Nor, as a consequence, are we afraid of retribution and punishment when we act selfishly or as traitors to our people. Our ancestors here in the United States created a unified people and a unified consciousness, which we today call Pan Afrikanism and nationalism, because they used ancestral ritual to unify themselves. Our historians tell us this was accomplished in the ancestral ritual of the ring shout, which brought together Afrikans of diverse nations into a unified and collective whole. From many peoples they created one people, and they used ancestral ritual to accomplish this.

We do not recognize the Afrikan gods of our fathers and mothers, but instead worship the gods of foreigners. So, therefore, ideologically and culturally we put into the deepest parts of our consciousness a primary loyalty to the people whose gods we give our love and devotion and adoration and allegiance to. Nor do those religions teach us how to invoke the power of that connection to the Divine Essence for the purposes of bettering and guiding in concrete and practical terms our lives or the lives of those we love, or the lives of our people. So by worshipping the gods of foreigners, we cut ourselves off from the ancestral wisdom that would allow us access to knowledge and ethics and spiritual and practical power that can revolutionize our lives and the lives of our people. Our ancestors and the gods of our ancestors cannot speak to us to give us direction and guidance and assistance in our struggle against the enemy to be free because we do not even acknowledge that they exist! Who can protect you more, someone else's gods, or the gods acknowledged and worshipped by your own people?

All of these things, the reverence of our ancestors, and the worship of our gods, and the study of our sacred and traditional wisdom, are actions that compel us to think and act in ways that are collective and communal. They reinforce within ourselves the consciousness of obligation as Afrikan persons to the Afrikan whole. Culturally and psychologically, it helps to clarify what is foreign and what is native to our way of life, to our way of being in the world. It helps us to make the proper and critical distinction between who were are and who our enemy is.

We are subjects of the reign of King "Dead-from-the-neck-up"

The situation in which we find ourselves today accords with an era in cosmic experience, according to the Ifa scriptures, when things were upside down, in total disorder, backwards, and topsy-turvy. This period is discussed in the odu Obara-Okanran as the reign of King Modakeke, which Chief Falade tells us is translated into English as "Dead-from-the-neck-up." [3] Afrikan people today are living in the reign of Modakeke. We are literally "Dead-from-the-neck-up," and this is the problem that we face in trying to seek solutions to the challenge of our liberation. Chief Fela Sowande tells us that the Ifa scriptures describe the period of the reign of "Modakeke, "Dead-from-the-neck-up," as an era in which the elders were acting as the children and the children acting as elders, when men were acting as women and women were acting as men; "that is how stupid they all were in those days," the scriptures say.

In the reign of "Dead-from-the-neck-up" we find ourselves doing those things that lead to our personal and collective destruction. That is precisely how stupid we all are. We find that we are committed, whether consciously or not, to inflicting hurt, pain, and damage upon ourselves and in our relations with each other. In the reign of Modakeke, King "Dead-from-the-neck-up," we exploit each other for personal gain -- for money, for sex, for ego, for favors with our enemy -- and we easily rationalize our actions; we justify to ourselves why we act as brutally and as savagely and as hatefully toward ourselves and toward each other as our enemy acts and feels towards us.

What is the solution and how should it manifest?

The solution to the absence of a real role for elders in our personal, communal, and national life is to self-consciously re-Afrikanize ourselves. As long as we are culturally European, and think as Europeans, even if we are not wholly conscious of this reality, we will always act in ways that will ultimately protect, preserve, and benefit Europeans in their

[3] See Fasina Falade, Ijo Orunmila (Lynwood CA: Ara Ifa Publishing, 1998) for this and subsequent discussion in this essay.

maintenance of power over us. Only if we become culturally Afrikan -- Afrikan in the deepest aspects of our consciousness -- will we act in ways that will enable us to create power for our own liberation. Indeed, only then will we have the creativity and vision and inner resolve and self-love to achieve Afrikan liberation, independence, sovereignty, and power.

The Ifa priest Oloye Ifa Karade says that Afrikan people in the United States should thoroughly reform their lives culturally, psychologically, and spiritually.[4] Of primary importance is that we spiritually reconnect to our ancestors through embracing, re-adopting, and re-assimilating our cultural traditions. He says alien spiritual systems will fail to satisfy our inner ache for wholeness and transcendence because they are not ancestral. Therefore, they cannot provide the means by which we can reconnect to our authentic selves. Oloye Karade says our Afrikan ancestors hold the key to our personal and collective enlightenment, transformation, and empowerment. Without returning to them fully our efforts to attain salvation on all levels will fail.

Indeed, we must understand that when we talk about returning to our cultural traditions and to an ancestral way of life, we are talking about our whole way of life, a way of life that touches upon every aspect of human living -- politics, economics, education, family life, social life, personal values, intellect, psychology, history, purpose, truth, knowledge, spirituality and spiritual practice. We are not talking about going back in time. Rather, we are talking about transforming the way we live in this time according to the power of our ancestral reconnection. For us there is no meaningful or intelligent separation of the spiritual world from the material world.

What this means, practically speaking, Oloye Karade says, is that we must move beyond Afrocentricity, as it is popularly understood and practiced, to a greater level of commitment and cultural and intellectual maturity. Afrocentricity points us in the direction that we must go, but it is not sufficient to get us there. It is not enough to be aware of the importance of Afrikan history and culture. We must live as Afrikans.

What does he mean by this? He explains that Afrikans in the United States have adopted outward forms of Afrikanity -- Afrikan dress, Afrikan-like wedding ceremonies, naming ceremonies, rites of passage, and even Afrikan motifs in religious expressions -- but he calls these actions superficial, confused, and unsystematic. At bottom, he says the core of the average Afrikan person's *belief system*, and consequently his/her behavior, is still European. This is because Afrikans at their core reject Afrikan belief and culture.

For transformation to be meaningful, says Oloye Karade, Afrikans in the United States must commit to an Afrikan traditional *system*, which means that they must: (1). commit to a *specific* Afrikan culture, (2). undergo the initiations that are within that culture and become educated in its wisdom *system*, (3). make a pilgrimage to that culture's sacred city or land, and (4). ritualize all stages of human growth and development *within the structure of that specific Afrikan culture*.

Only when one begins to embark upon this level and seriousness of commitment will a person then begin to understand the true nature of the Afrikan revolution. Further, he says it will become clearer just how European one's consciousness is because one will inevitably experience inner psychological resistance to the change. He also says that the more Afrikan one becomes the more odd and out of line one's new way of life will seem to the general way in which Afrikans

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[4] See Baba Ifa Karade, Ojise: Messenger of the Yoruba Tradition (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1996). See also Baba Ifa Karade, Imoye: A Definition of the Ifa Tradition (Brooklyn, NY: Athelia Henrietta Press, Inc., 1999).

live their lives. This he calls a cleansing reaction, for it indicates that one is being purified of those elements in one's consciousness that are anti-Afrikan, that one is on the path to real change. Things become clearer. Oloye Karade says this total embrace of a specific Afrikan cultural tradition is absolutely and unavoidably necessary if we Afrikans in the United States are to achieve the total liberation of our personal and collective selves.

It is time for us to give up our muddy water

Chief Falade urges us that the time for drinking muddy water is over. Muddy water is what we drank to survive when we were thirsty and had no other water to drink. So we borrowed from the European's culture and we fashioned some of its elements to keep us sane and to help us resist. We did the best we could with what we had. But now, he says, it is time for the children to accept our destiny and drink from the clear waters that exist within the wells of our ancestral tradition. "It is time for the strength of the people to overcome the suffering of 400 years and return to our heritage. We appreciate the muddy water, but it is time to drink from the cool, refreshing well of truth that exists" in the spiritual reality of our ancestor's ways. When we look inward and begin to identify with our culture and mores, Chief Falade says, we will find the truth that will give us the clarity to overcome the burdens of the past.

Though many of us are blessed to have elders who love and guide us in our personal lives, in the collective sense I say that it is only when we transform our consciousness by becoming truly Afrikan that elders will assume the role they are supposed to assume in our lives and be the leaders and examples and sources of protection and wisdom and nurture that we need. Our culture will insist upon it. At present, a person who is in trouble or under attack finds himself or herself alone, with no one to turn to for help, support, or protection. That is because we do not have *a system* in place to which the people can turn. Neither you nor I have any such place to turn to.

Who is the person or the group of persons in the Afrikan community in Lincoln, Nebraska, that speaks on behalf of the people in the community and that commissions members of the community to carry out various tasks that aim to defend and promote the community's interests? Where is the Council of Elders? Who can say, as we say in the Ifa tradition, "I was sent by my superiors. I did not send myself. The ase [authority] with which I speak belongs to those who sent me."?[5]

Where is the Council of Elders that calls the community together to adjudicate conflict in the community? If I have a conflict in the Afrikan community with a fellow Afrikan, where is the Council of Elders who can hear my case and decide how to restore reconciliation, order, and community to all of the people? Where is it that all of the Afrikan people of the community can go for this type of forum?

Who is the person or group of persons to whom any new Afrikan person coming to the Afrikan village in Lincoln, whether they are coming from some other part of the United States, or even the state of Nebraska, or from countries in Afrika, the Caribbean, or Europe -- if they are Afrikans -- who is the group that they must go to for a formal gesture of respect so that they can be accepted into the community here, this Afrikan village in Lincoln, Nebraska?

This is what I mean by Afrikan tradition. Because if this kind of culture were in place, the person who comes to the Afrikan village in Lincoln would have to be ritually initiated as a member of this community to be able to function here and to live here. They would have to

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[5] See Wande Abimbola, Ifa Will Mend Our Broken World: Thoughts on Yoruba Religion and Culture in Africa and the Diaspora (Roxbury, MA: Aim Books, 1997).

recognize the elders and give them the proper respect. They would have to participate in the sacred ceremonies and holidays, during which we celebrate the culture and give respect to the ancestors and to the gods and hear the messages they have to give to us for our edification and guidance and growth. They would enjoy the material and spiritual protection of the community.

If this kind of Afrikan culture were in place, a person who is irresponsible to Afrikan people would have to go before the Council of Elders and the people and give an accounting to them and to the community of their actions. They would have to commit themselves to change, or they would be expelled from the community, rendering them useless to the oppressors, for they would be able to influence no one in the community (If we had this kind of system in place, no one could collaborate with the enemy, in any event). We would compel accountability from those persons who now look like us and pretend to care about us but who have no loyalty to us.

If we communally and personally ritualized the reverence of our ancestors, then we could ask and receive from them guidance and power to fight for our liberation. If we were practicing this kind of Afrikan tradition, we would be thinking and acting on a totally different plane. Our leaders would be selected by us instead of being selected for us. Our communities would be strong because our spirits would be strong. We would know that we can win because we would have unshakable confidence in ourselves.

Our whole approach to education would be different. Our approach to spirituality would be different. Our approach to politics, to economics, and to culture would be different. Our friends would be different, and our relations with one another would be different. We would be a people who could not be stopped because our minds would become impermeable and inaccessible to the enemy's reasoning, lies, foolishness, and deceit. Our spirits would be strong and vigorous and free, and our liberation would become an inevitability that would only await the working out of time.

COMMUNITY NEWS

We held our Annual Awards Program on July 28th. The purpose of this program is to recognize our members for contributions they have made to the organization and/or for their personal growth with respect to our goal of transformation from "black" malehood to African manhood. This year's program began with a call to order by our Eso/Alakosa Asha, Ajani. After securing permission from the elders to proceed, he called on Brothers Biko, Nbassa, and Brother A to lead us in the pouring of libation, the creed, and the nguzo saba, respectively. Following these opening ceremonies, our m.c., Nuha, was introduced, who brought up the Alaga for his welcoming remarks. The Alaga, Mondo, spoke briefly of the purposes of the organization and the connection between those and the theme of the program, "The Elders Must Step Forward." He also took the opportunity to ask our guests from the outside to be diligent in getting more involvement by Africans from the outside in our programs.

The next part of the program involved the recognition by

the Alaga of the work put in by the members of the outgoing Central Committee and the installation of the incoming Central Committee. Our guest speaker, Ahati Toure, reminded these Brothers of their responsibilities they would shoulder in providing leadership to the organization and offered them encouragement in their work.

Next, Brother A called up the following Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization members and recognized them for their consistent and timely payment of dues: Ed Greer, Issaiah Jones, Nbassa, George Devers, Rodney Freeman, and Mondo.

Certificates of appreciation and achievement were presented by Mondo to one of our sponsors, Henry D'Souza, for his frequent participation in our meetings and for duplicating our newsletter for our members and other readers of the HARAMBEE FLAME, and to our A'hati Toure for being our guest speaker. Certificates were also presented to the following Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization members for consistent attendance, active participation at meetings, representing the ideals of the organization in their behavior on the yard and elsewhere throughout the institution, and/or other achievements: Brother A(Terrence Alexander), Damani Ifoma, and Ed Greer.

A'hati Toure then delivered his address, "On the Matter of Elders Stepping Up to the Plate." The brother was thoughtful enough to send us the printed text of his address some days prior to the program. We have run it in its entirety, beginning on page 1. We express our appreciation to the Brother for this courtesy and especially for his taking the time to come out here and share his insights with us. Following the Brother's address, we spent time in discussion of issues he covered.

During the last half hour or so of the program, we listened to music from various parts of the continent, talked informally, and indulged in some refreshments. We were also treated to an impromptu performance of an original rap, "2 B Free," by Biko, Jabari, and Damani.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Organization Expands to Promote Sisterhood and Self-Esteem

"Sisterhood Agenda is beginning a national expansion to continue instilling the principles of sisterhood, self-knowledge, self-development and self-esteem in adolescent girls of African descent.

"Since its 1994 inception, the non-profit organization has raised more than $1 million to provide programming and scholarships to young women participants. Sisterhood Agenda is based in Durham, NC, and was founded by Angela D. Coleman, a cum laude graduate of Princeton University.

"Sisterhood Agenda is an award winning non-profit that directly addresses the health, social, educational and economic concerns of African American women and girls. The mission of Sisterhood Agenda is achieved through programming, educational workshops, presentations and public education campaigns. The organization is in the process of expanding to Durham's sister city, Raliegh, NC, and New Jersey...

"One of the signature programs that Sisterhood Agenda provides is 'A Journey Toward Womanhood'. Rooted in tha African rites of passage tradition, 'A Journey Toward Womanhood' takes a modern approach toward instilling in-depth knowledge of cultural roots and community awareness. The 'Journey' program builds and maintains healthy self-esteem, instills cultural pride and self-appreciation, and teaches life and social skills for self-sufficiency. The program also discourages teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, dropping out of school, drug abuse and other negative choices.

"Within the past six years, more than 250 girls have graduated from 'A Journey Toward Womanhood' and gone on to achieve their personal, educational and career goals...

"Sisterhood Agenda also offers SisterCamp, a summer enrichment program for girls ages 8-13. The group also sponsors social gatherings for adult women, secures volunteers, coordinates with other local agencies and provides training for social service agencies, schools, community organiza-

tions, churches and individuals who work with African American teenage girls..."

-from "A Journey Toward Womanhood," page 53, summer THE BLACK PERSPECTIVE(Sherman Oaks, CA.)

Youth of Color Organize at East Oakland High School

"Youth Against Community Injustice Nia(purpose in Swahili), aka YACIN...is a youth-led community organization based at Castlemont High School in East Oakland...[made up of] Africans, Asians, Latinos and Pacific Islander--organizing for the rights and liberation of oppressed peoples. [Its] mission is to build real grassroots power to fight against social injustice and human rights abuses in [their] community...

"YACIN was born in the fall of 1998 under the inspiration of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal...

"During the 1999-2000 school year, we faced...Proposition 21, the so-called 'Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, [which] threatened to lock up youth as young as 14 in adult prisons, to sentence 16 year olds to death, turn numerous misdemeanors into felonies, expand the three strike laws to cover youth offenders, and allow almost any type of indjependent youth organization(like YACIN) to be defined as a gang for merely wearing similar clothes in a group of three or more...

"In response, we initiated the Gettin' Down Coalition, and brought African and Latino students from all over Oakland together to fight against this madness. Gettin' Down... brought more than eighty young people from several Oakland High Schools and youth organizations...together every two weeks to strategize and organize to defeat Prop. 21 and save the life of Mumia...Even though Proposition 21 passed, voters in Oakland and other areas where the youth organized and protested voted majority NO...

"Currently YACIN is pushing forward with our campaign against the criminalization of youth and oppressed nationa-

lities and for the freedom of all political prisoners...we have been honored to be invited by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement to be a part of their contingent to South Africa for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (UNWCAR) in August. We are currently holding preparation classes several days a week, and plan to send at least seven students to share our experiences with the international community..."

-from "Youth Against Community Injustice NIA-YACIN: Youth Led Community Organizing Shakes Oakland," page 8, summer TURNING THE TIDE(Culver City, CA.)

Continuing Progress on Formation of African Union

"Africa set a new, yet cautious roadmap for the future July 9-11 with the official formation of the African Union(AU), the continental organization that will replace the 38-year-old Organization of African Unity (OAU).

"The gathering, attended by some 41 heads of state and government, elected host President Frederick Chiluba as chairman of the new organization...

"Former Ivorian foreign minister Amara Essy came on board as the continental body's new secretary-general, replacing Tanzania's Salim Ahmed Salim...

"President Chiluba and Mr. Essy were charged with the task of putting into place the institutions and organs of the AU, an integrated and more focused body aimed at improving the lot of African countries and their peoples.

"The three-day summit endorsed the establishment of a General Assembly, Commission, an Executive Council, and an African Parliament as the four key organs of the AU. A Court of Justice and a Central Bank and an institution grouping African civic societies are the other AU institutions...

"A major economic initiative agreed upon at the summit could be launched as early as next March, according to Senegalese Pres. Abdoulaye Wade.

"The 'New African Initiative' is a plan that emanated from

the merger of Pres. Wade's Omega economic initiative and the MAP economic plan, co-authored by Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasnjo of Nigeria and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria.

"Donors who participate in the plan will be 'closely associated' in the management of funds which they would allocate to African counties to finance projects that will be selected from the new plan, according to Pres. Wade..."

-from "African Union is Made a Reality," pages 3 and 6, July 24 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

Suits Filed in Federal Court Against Supermax Prisons

"...The 3 current big supermax suits directly involve prisoners from Connecticut, Washington DC, New Mexico, Wyoming, Ohio and Wisconsin. Because the cases are in federal court the decisions...have a chance of affecting prisoners across the country...

"The first of these cases to be filed was in 2000 by two Boscobel prisoners initially without an attorney. The case, Jone 'El et al. v. Litscher et al., (00-C-421-C in the Western District of Wisconsin), was certified as a class action February 15, 2001; an amended complaint was filed June 29, 2001...

"Boscobel, west of Madison near the Iowa border, is by far Wisconsin's most expensive prison. Lights are on 24 hours a day and prisoners are [awaken] hourly through the night and have only 4 hours a week out of their cells. There is no outdoor exercise; all visits are by video...

"The second suit is Austin et al. v. Wilkinson et al. in the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Divisions concerning the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown OH. In this case the prisoners are not seeking money damages but rather a court order to remedy the inhumane conditions. In addition to conditions similar to those described above, prisoners who request psychiatric help(or any medical attention) are interviewed through their cell doors, in the hearing of both guards and other prisoners. What is called psychotherapy is conducted while prisoners are chained to a pole.

"The third suit, Joslyn v. Armstrong, was filed February 7, 2001 in U.S. District Court in Hartford CT challenging the export of Connecticut prisoners to Wallens Ridge state prison in far southwestern Virginia. The latest figures available are 139 Connecticut prisoners, 70 Wyoming prisoners and 40 New Mexico prisoners being held at Wallens Ridge. This lawsuit focuses on the use of 5-point restraints often used for 48 hours at a time, and of electroshock weapons.

"Amnesty International has joined other human rights groups in noting 'a persistent pattern of institutional abuse in Virginia's supermaximum security prisons'..."

-from "Cruel and Usual," pages 1 and 2, August COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS NEWSLETTER(Santa Fe, N.M.)

European-Supremacist Church Sets Forth Its Agenda

"...Our organization which you have been referred to/joined, is the fastest growing and most dynamic and inspiring organization in existence for the survival, expansion, and advancement of our beloved White Race. Our Church is the only organization of its kind, being a racial religion for the White Race. We have the **total** solution to the ills of this planet and we are confident that we not only **can** win with 'Creativity', but that we **will** win with 'Creativity'...

"Based on the Eternal Laws of Nature, History, Logic and Common Sense, we Creators believe: that our race is our religion; that the white race is nature's finest; that racial loyalty is the highest of all honors and that racial treason is the worst of all crimes; that what is good for the white race is the highest virtue and what is bad for the white race is the ultimate sin; that the one and only, true and revolutionary white racial religion--Creativity--is the only salvation for the white race...

"Definitions: white race--Nature's finest creatures; those whose genetic make-up is wholly or predominantly that of the people indigenous to the European continent, the collection of traits of which are readily distinguishable from the other races. Mud races--Those not of the white race; races typified by yellow, brown, or black skin and little social, cultural, and intellectual progression..."

-from THE CREATOR MEMBERSHIP MANUAL by Rev. Matt Hale, Pontifex Maximus, the World Church of the Creator(East Peoria, IL.) Editor's note: In this manual, there is a section dealing with law enforcement. For Africans who are of the notion that African people are "niggers"/ "niggaz," you may find comfort in the following excerpt from this section: "Keep in mind that many police officers are naturally sympathetic to our cause. They have to deal with the **niggers** and mud races on an every day basis. They see how they commit many more crimes than do our people and realize full well that there are serious differences between the race..."

BACK IN TIME

The Fifth Pan-African Congress was an event of great importance in Nkrumah's life. The congress's ideals - anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and non-violence - were to constitute the basis of his political philosophy.

In order to implement the decisions of the congress a group of West Africans set up a regional organization, the West African National Secretariat, headquartered in London. Kwame Nkrumah was elected General Secretary. The secretariat's primary responsibility was to develop and implement plans for a West African federation of independent states. Nkrumah linked the creation of such a federation to the liberation of Africa as a whole...
A small room at 94 Gray's Inn Road became the young nationalists' headquarters. Here preparations were made for a meeting between leaders of the British and French West African colonies at which they planned to discuss urgent problems and develop a concrete program of joint action...Kwame Nkrumah made a trip to Paris where he met with Leopold Senghor, Felix Houphouet-Boingy, Lamine Gueye and Sourous Apithy, African deputies to the French National Assembly.

The conference took place in London in late August and early September 1946. Senghor and Apithy came as representatives of the French West African colonies. The delegates to the conference approved the decisions of the Fifth Pan-African Congress and joined it in declaring that a struggle should be waged not just for self-government within the framework of the colonial territories but for the formation of a West

African federation as well. The resolution that was adopted demanded immediate and absolute self-government for the peoples of West Africa.

Nkrumah went to Paris a second time and once again those with whom he spoke assured him that pan-African ideals had their full support. It would seem that every obstacle had been overcome and in the independent Africa of the future there would be no place for borders artificially created by imperialist powers. Lagos, Nigeria was chosen as the site for a new and more representative conference of those who advocated the creation of a united, independent Africa. There, in 1948, the West African National Conference would be held.

Source: KWAME NKRUMAH by Yuri Smertin

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Organization of All-Afrikan Unity is the continuation of the Honorable Malcolm X's philosophy, politics and revolutionary thought. The Organization of Afro-american Unity was formed by Malcolm X on June 28, 1964. After his assassination, there was one other meeting of the group, after which the organization became inactive. Brother Ade Oba Tokunbo, a staunch fighter for Afrikan freedom for over 20 years and a veteran Panther, reformed the organization in 1994 as the Organization of All-Afrikan Unity. The Organization works tc carry on the spirit of the Honorable Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, as well as other Pan Afrikan theorists. The work is accomplished thru THE AKOBEN PLAN, a framework for the reconsolidation of Afrikan Civilization. For more information about the Organization of All-Afrikan Unity, write: P.O. Box 41144; Baltimore, MD.; 21203-6144. The telephone number is (410) 233-9595/233-3074.

Free to prisoners, Incarcerated parents Manual, Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities, in a new updated version, is now available from Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. Write to Legal Services for Prisoners with Children at 100 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA. 94102, (415) 255-7036.

The IT'S ABOUT TIME Committee to Celebrate the Founding of the Black Panther Party will be holding a 35th. Anniversary Reunion and Conference on October 11-14, 2001. This event will be held at the University of the District of Columbia. The committee is seeking the following in order to contribute to the event's success:

-Donations, which are tax-deductible; donations of $50 or more will be recognized in the conference program book.

-Donations of memorabilia from the Black Panther Party or or other social justice movements of the '60s and '70s for a historical exhibit which will include newspapers, buttons, posters, photos, and other documents.

-Spreading of the word about the reunion/conference through organizations, friends, and progressive media.

-Volunteers willing to help organize at the event.

Contact the committee at (916) 455-0908

For more information on Sisterhood Agenda and its programs, contact Sisterhood Agenda at (919) 493-8358 or visit their web site at www.sisterhoodagenda.com.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization fall symposium is scheduled for October 23, 2001. Information as to theme, guest speaker, etc. will be forthcoming.

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Africans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other group of people. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

NGUZO SABA

Umoja - Unity
Kujichagulia - Self-determination
Ujima - Collective Work and Responsibility
Ujamaa - Cooperative Economics
Nia - Purpose
Kuumba - Creativity
Imani - Faith

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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